

Pop-up controller tough to install

Memory-resident pop-up programs give you handy access to everything from electronic Rolodexes and phone dialers to calculators and note pads.

If you get infatuated with certain pop-up programs, you'll use them all the time. Severe problems can crop up, however, when you install more than one such program, or when you want to reclaim memory being hoarded by an inactive one.

Pop-up programs — technically called terminate and stay resident programs — take up valuable computer memory even when they're not in use. They often compete for keystrokes and computer memory, resulting in keyboard lockups at the most inopportune times. It can be infuriating.

In order to keep conflicts between these programs and memory usage to a minimum, several programs are available, notably Pop Drop and Referee, both of which I previously tried and found to be more trouble than they're worth. But now a new program is available that looks better at first



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glance. It's called Extra; it's produced by Delta Technology International of Eau Claire, Wis., and costs \$99.

Extra claims to:

- Use a minimum of space to run up to 26 different pop-up programs. It loads just one program at a time into the memory space. When another is requested, the present one is unloaded and the new one takes its place. Even if you load a dozen programs through Extra, the total memory consumed will always be just that of the largest one plus the space for the master program, which uses about 35 kilobytes.

- Eliminate conflicts. Because programs are loaded and unloaded as they are used, contentious programs never share the same area. Even so, because of the latitude possible when designing a pop-up,

there are some combinations of programs that interact poorly or not at all.

- Provide just one hot key to remember. Once programs have been loaded by Extra all you do is press the Extra hot key and a menu pops onto your screen. Because Extra takes care of invoking each program, you don't have to remember the different key combinations.

On the downside, I simply could not get Extra to work properly on my IBM PS/2 model 50. I encountered so many problems in installing and testing the program, I was unable to verify most of the company's claims. My computer locked up repeatedly when using Extra, and often did not respond at all to the designated hot key. And when it did respond, the delays were maddening. One of my most commonly used pop-ups, a monthly calendar called Popcal, didn't work at all.

To make matters worse, it messed up the graphics on a menu system that was previously installed on my machine. I found it nec-

essary to go through the whole installation process again and again whenever a idiosyncrasy in Extra's operation was found.

Ironically, another person I lent the program to did not encounter as many problems as I did. He was using a less complicated operating environment, however, and had a very high level of technical skill.

- The Bottom Line: While the program has potential, it's probably only good in situations where an expert can install and test it completely. In my case, it was certainly easier to learn through trial and error which pop-up programs could be used simultaneously on my machine, rather than dealing with this frustrating program. I do not recommend it.

It is available from Delta Technology International, 1621 Westgate Road, Eau Claire, Wis. 54703, (715) 832-7575.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity.